



Cambridge SHIRE HALL Chronicle

Reports on the establishment and growth of the of Cambridgeshire County Council, the Assize Courts, County and Shire Halls and some of the disagreements between the City and County Councils which are explored more fully under the relevant sections

c.35.1

headlines

1888

County Council established under Local Government Act, much of business previously transacted by Quarter Sessions assigned to them. Offices established in various parts of the town & Council meetings held in Guildhall [3.7, 3.1, 3.2]

1899 04 18

Death Hale Wortham, clerk County Council

1901 02 08

The ceremony of proclaiming King Edward VII was carried out at Ely. The High Sheriff in his official uniform read the Proclamation from the steps of the Shire Hall and a procession then marched along High Street to the Market Hill where thousands of people were congregated to hear the Proclamation again read. Every point of vantage was seized upon and it was refreshing to see the much-maligned Jubilee fountain proved to be a useful stand for sightseers.

1901 03 25

Cambridge may be justly congratulated on her County Councillors. The meeting was opened and conducted throughout in a very business-like & decorous manner. Good nature, a courtly yielding to others and a desire to be conciliatory seemed to be general. The language was decidedly moderate. Another noticeable feature is the large number of young men on the Council. Youthful spirits will go on working cheerfully instead of mournfully shaking their heads and eternally speaking of the "good old times 01 03 25

1902 07 09

Sir – the county council is much misunderstood by the majority of Cambridge people who seem to regard us with suspicious eyes and seek to alienate the town and county by setting up Cambridge as a county borough. As I look back over the last 14 years there is not a single instance where Cambridge has not had the utmost consideration and fairness of treatment from the hands of the County Council. The setting up of the backs of Cambridge people against the Council is the work of a small body of discontents – C.C.

1902 07 16

Sir – if Cambridge and Chesterton are excluded from the County Council it will become a superfluous organisation whose few remaining functions could well be carried out by the Rural Councils. The loss of revenue would impose upon the rural districts a burden which would be simply crushing. What would Cambridge gain – nothing unless it is made a County Borough. But with the population of Chesterton, Cherry Hinton and Newnham Croft added Cambridge would still be short of the 50,000 requisite to form a County Borough – John Bester

1904 02 23

County Council electioneering tactics at Cherry Hinton were exposed in confidential correspondence between two potential candidates. Mr Neal, the owner of Cherry Hinton Hall, was too unknown to have the slightest chance of carrying the seat. Many scarcely knew there was a Hall and he had not had time to make it a centre of interest. The parish is Radical to the backbone and the Conservatives would be giving the seat away to the opposition were he to stand. However Mr Brooke had great strength with the cottagers and even the Dissenters would support him. In the event of his being elected he would not serve once the Education question had been settled and would stand down, making it easier for Mr Neal to win the seat. 04 02 23

1907 03 07

In the recent County Council elections for Castle Ward, Cambridge both A.B. Whibley and James Wootten received equal votes. Both candidates are elected but neither can vote until one or other petitions the High Court, which is an expensive process. In a similar incident in Huntingdonshire candidates drew lots but after the 1857 parliamentary election in Huntingdon both Mr Fellowes and Mr Heathcote sat in the House of Commons but were unable to vote until Heathcote gave way. 07 03 07

1907 11 23

Officers who preside at country polling districts are required to bring the boxes containing votes to Shire Hall ready for counting next morning. Usually they do so comfortably seated in a carriage. But one cycled a considerable distance laden with all the papers and paraphernalia. The feat required some courage as the journey through the mud, wind and rain must have been an unpleasant experience even to an active cyclist in a very fair state of training 07 03 09

1907 11 23

County official praised for auditing – 07 11 23a

1908

County negotiate with Town Council over use of their offices [1.8]

1910

1910 03 04

Since the inauguration of County Councils 21 years ago they have grown enormously in importance and in power. Their responsibilities over public health, sanitation, water supply and the administration of the Poor Law will probably be increased in the new future. This throws the administration more and more into the hands of the officials. Ratepayers should take care to select their representatives but unfortunately the absurd practice still prevails locally of voting for councillors according to their political predilections and the best man is frequently defeated. 10 03 04e

1910 11 04

The County Council needed extra offices for its staff. At present departments were housed in different buildings and councillors often went to the wrong one. They could take space in the Guildhall but would be paying rent that would assist the Borough to erect a very fine building in which they had no permanent share. It would be more economical to build on the Shire Hall site, removing the Chief Constable's house and other police buildings, but most convenient to purchase a building on a more central site. However they must bear in mind the great difference in cost 10 11 04a & b

1910 11 04

The County Council voted to spend £1,000 to oppose plans to enlarge the Cambridge boundaries and create a county borough. It was not in any sense a manufacturing town, though it was important as a railway centre and had important markets. The County Coroner's district would be reduced with his salary cut in consequence – the Borough would pay compensation for loss of remuneration – and the County police force would be reduced by one sergeant and four constables. In addition seven elementary schools and 2,700 children would be transferred to the Borough. But Cherry Hinton residents favoured amalgamation. 10 11 04h

1910 12 16

The crowds outside the Shire Hall (Assize Courts) assembled early for the results of the poll. They stamped their cold feet on the muddy, puddley ground and scowled at the hopeless sky that spread a light unpleasant drizzle. A little girl, doubtful of her right to stand on so important a site, cuddled up closely to a friendly shop window. An errand boy allowed his political ardour to overcome his sense of what is required of express deliveries. He was joined by a butcher's boy, with a liberal show of Conservative colours, who gave his willing assistance in doing nothing to their mutual satisfaction. 10 12 16d

1912

County Council offices scattered in Regent Street, Hills Road, Sidney Street & St Andrew's Street; options: to use Assize court as council chamber & build new offices, Shire Hall (which felt to be too far from station); to join with Borough in new Guildhall or to build new offices; decide to purchase old Hobson Street Methodist Chapel & houses adjacent for £3,000? £6,200 site & £9,740 building [1.9, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5]

1912 01 06

County Council clerk resigns; new appointment still in hands of Standing Joint Committee, however is Bill before Parliament under which County Council will elect own Clerk [3.3,3.4]

1912 02 02

The accumulation of duties from which the County Council is suffering as increased the amount of work to be got through at the quarterly meetings. Yesterday's lasted from ten in the morning until half-past three in the afternoon and most of the members had drifted out long before the end. There is a tendency to rush things and a general spirit of indifference due to weariness of the flesh. Chairmen of committees tend to leave the chamber when they have piloted through their own reports. Some alteration must be made. 12 02 02g

1912 02 02

A new County Hall is needed. The existing clerk, a solicitor in private practice, works from his own office. The Education and Medical departments are on opposite sides of Sidney Street, the Finance Clerk in is Regent Street, the Architect in Hobson Street and the Surveyor in Hills Road. This is inconvenient and uneconomical and leads to inefficiency. 12 02 02h

1912 03 08

The last meeting of the Chesterton Urban District Council recalled the changes during the last 40 years. Before 1880 there were no street lamps, no sewage system, no street watering and an imperfect

water supply. The paths were unkerbed, there was no collection of house refuse, no medical officer, no sanitary inspector, no recreation ground and very few allotments. The population had risen from 5,000 to 12,000. Now councillors would help improve the Borough of Cambridge at large 12 03 08f

1912 03 15

The County Council is to purchase Hobson Street Wesleyan Chapel and the adjoining house to build a Council Chamber and offices. The site is central and quiet and although the cost might appear to be high it would eventually result in a saving. There would be much greater efficiency to have all officials under one roof instead of them running backwards and forwards from one place to another. They would also need four less telephones, saving £30 12 03 15f

1912 08 09

The County Council had considered various sites for a new County Hall. The purchase price of Hobson Street Wesleyan Chapel was £3,500 (£324,000 today) which was fair. In the chapel they had a good deal of material and the shell and outside walls would stand and be utilised. But it would not be sufficient. So they needed to purchase a house from Christ's College; they were not desirous of selling and the price of £2,500 was the least they would accept. The erection of county hall would increase the value of the other buildings in Hobson Street and help to bring a much-needed town improvement through the widening of Sussex Street. 12 08 09

1912 10 12

County Council clerk resigns; new appointment still in hands of Standing Joint Committee, however is Bill before Parliament under which County Council will elect own Clerk [3.3,3.4]

1912 10 18

Ashley Tabrum appointed Clerk to County Council – 12 10 18e

1913 10 31

A new Act of Parliament imposed further duties on County Councils. The best thing they could do was to go on strike and say they were not going to take any more burdens on or find more money for various things the Government send down, unless they paid a good proportion of the expense. But then the Government might come down, do the work and charge the Council with the expense. 13 10 31 p11 CIP

1913 11 31

Councillors queried the cost of furnishing the new County Hall. It was not a club and should not be furnished as if it were. It was suggested the Clerk should have a Turkey carpet costing £22 10s. and a writing table costing £35. This was extravagant. Councillors' seats would be of oak and covered with pigskin. But they should be cheap and uncomfortable since they would only spend a few hours there during the year. But the whole thing was already finished, and nothing could be done, they were told. 13 11 31 p12 CIP

1914 02 06

At the opening of the new County Hall in Hobson Street the chairman thanked the Town Council for allowing them to use their council chamber and committee rooms for the past 25 years. In 1747 the old Shire Hall had been built on Market Hill above arches where butchers had their stalls on market days. In 1842 this passed to the town when a new Shire Hall at Castle Hill was ready for occupation. But the enormous development of administrative business had now brought the County Council again into the centre to this new commodious and economical building, finally bringing together departments previously distributed in all parts of the town. 14 02 06, a-c [1.17]

1914 03 27

The Cambridge County Borough Bill (with which were included Wakefield and Luton) was defeated in the House of Commons. It would inflict great hardship on the county. If it were taken away the rest of the area would be almost entirely agricultural, some MPs said. But the County Council would be

more efficient if all members represented agricultural interests rather than the urban interests of the Borough, the Cambridge MP contended. 14 03 27f; A farce – editorial – 14 03 27d... great jubilation the County ... Sir George Fordham but disappointment in the Borough, 14 03 27

1920

1920 06 30

Council Staff. The County Hall Committee has considered the resolution of the Cambs. County Council that the time has arrived when it is necessary to provide increased accommodation for the Council's staff. Sir Douglas Newton reported the result of an interview with the Bursar of Christ's College if they are prepared to sell Bene't House. The owners of the ground rents of the adjoining properties occupied by Mr. P. Morley and Messrs. Eaden Lilley and Co., Ltd., are to be approached with a view to the purchase of the freehold of the property, and Mr, Percy W. Gray. (Scruby and Gray) was asked to advise the Committee what offer they should make for the Riding School site, At a subsequent meeting the Clerk of the Council reported as to negotiations for adjoining property, and submitted a valuation by Messrs. Scruby and Gray for the Riding School site. It was then agreed to recommend the County Council to authorise the Committee to make an offer for the Riding School site for the amount of the valuation. The Committee also resolved that the amount to be reported to the County Finance Committee as the sum likely to be required for capital expenditure during the next five years should be: Extension of County Hall, including site and equipment, £21,000 20 06 30 CIPof

1920 10 27

County council war memorial, County Hall, unveiled – Ch 20 10 27a

1920 12 20

Large German field gun offered as war memorial at Shire Hall but this would obstruct entrance; two trench mortars could be put under the portico at either side and would not take too much trouble to keep clean – both rejected - CDN 20 12 20

1922 01 04

Assize Court figures of Law, Justice, Mercy & Power to remain, had been removed 22 01 04c

1925 01 19

A fire broke out in the Grand Jury Room at the Shire Hall which destroyed all the woodwork and furniture. It is a large room is situated at the front of the building on the Police Station side and contained a table and some chairs. A stairway leads from it to the grand jury gallery in the Crown Court and it was through the fire roaring up these stairs that damage was done to the court by smoke and steam 25 01 19 [1.20]

1928 01 02

The Home Secretary has decided to discontinue the Cambridge prison on Castle Hill and has offered it to the County Council for £4,812. The buildings consist of a central block comprising laundry, workshop, kitchen, labour cells, ladder store, hospital, photographers' hut, execution shed, schoolroom and governor's house. The Office of Works wishes to lease the main buildings to store their records in. This would not prevent the council in the future from building a new county hall on the prison site. 28 01 02

1928 01 23

An interesting discussion in regard to the future of Cambridge Prison and the Castle Mound took place at a meeting of the County Council. The Home Secretary would convey it to them for £4,812. The County did not want the mound, which was more closely connected with Cambridge than the rest of the county. All persons interested, including the Borough Council and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society would be consulted when its future was settled. Something was also said about the possibility of removing the County Hall in Hobson Street to the Shire Hall site 28 01 23

1928 04 28

Less than 20 years ago I was doing journalistic work in a Hobson Street office. In those days there was no County Hall opposite, nor talk of one. It was begun only 15 years ago and if anyone had been asked how long it would remain the County Council headquarters he might have answered 'A hundred years at least'. But so great has been the extra work thrown on the Council that already the building has been outgrown and plans are now to be prepared for a new building on the Castle Hill site. There are now 86 officials and ratepayers may ask if such an army of officers are really necessary
28 04 28

1928 05

Order plans for a new Shire Hall, Castle Hill, on site of County Gaol, this had stood idle since prisoners transferred to Huntingdon gaol; in 1919 the building had been fitted up as a branch repository of the Public Record Office. Site acquired for County Council, records sent away, & new Shire Hall started using bricks from the old gaol [2.2]

1929 01 28

The County Architect presented sketch plans for a new building on the Cambridge castle site, containing office accommodation, with council chamber, library and storerooms. It was futile to prepare plans for their existing needs when it was practically certain that under the new Local Government Bill they would have a large amount of additional work thrown upon them. Mr Dunn had erected the present County Hall in Hobson Street & was able to compete with the best architects in the country with regard to a beautiful scheme and a beautiful building. But if he was forced to collaborate with another architect there would be delays and they would never get the building erected. 29 01 28

1929 01 28

Certain documents of an historical nature are stored in Cambridge prison on Castle Hill and access is permitted to University students for the purpose of study. But if a County Hall is built on the site the Prison will be pulled down and the documents removed. The University fears that they would lose a very big educational factor and urge the County Council to provide accommodation for them in their new building. Having regard to the tendency of modern legislation to give Councils more work they would probably require considerably more accommodation at the end of 20 years and such storage would then be valuable for administrative purposes. 29 01 28

1929 03 23

Shire Hall model, p8

1929 04 13

Shire Hall courts debate, p8

1929 07 22

New County Hall plans and tenders, 29 07 22 p5*

1929 11 04

The Government Office of Works have made arrangements for the records at present stored in the old Prison on Castle Hill, to be removed from Cambridge to another disused gaol. It is their policy to concentrate such records at Canterbury. The Governor's House at the old Prison will be adapted to provide temporary accommodation for county council staff and rooms in the prison gatehouse used for storage purposes. This has released accommodation at the County Hall for other departments
CDN 4.11.1929

1930

1930 01

Reject proposal that would have abandoned Shire Hall plans [2.16]

1930 04 28

Shire Hall tender, p3

1930 06 20

The old county gaol at Castle Hill was opened to the public. Since 1916 when it was closed because of a scarcity of prisoners – it has been said there were not enough to keep the place clean – the prison has only been used for Government record purposes. Then it changed hands and became the property of the County Council; a writer to the CDN threw out the suggestion that it should be opened for public visitation, and the scheme became an actuality. Maids in their scanty summer frocks, flannelled youths, mothers and fathers and grandfathers queued for admission to the County Gaol on Cambridge Castle Hill. The execution shed was a popular rendezvous along with the condemned cell, the burial ground and padded cell. People searched for links with the past. They found few. The gaol is not what it was. Dirt and rust have replaced whitewashed walls and polished steelwork and certain parts have become dilapidated. 30 06 20a [2.5,1.10,2.6]

1931 02 06

Shire Hall flooring, p6

1931 07 31

Shire Hall demolition picture – 31 07 24f

1932 07 15

The new Shire Hall was opened with little ceremony in the presence of a handful of people. The Architect (H.H. Dunn) presented the Chairman, Ald W.C. Jackson, with a gold-covered key engraved with the County Arms with which he unlocked the door. Soon a stream of guest arrived and the corridors presented a most animated appearance. The council chamber is very similar to that at the old County Hall in Hobson Street from which all the seats and tables have been removed while every care has been taken to provide the maximum air, light and spaciousness to the offices. “New Shire Hall shames town” 32 07 15e & f

1932 07 29

Cambridgeshire County Council held their first meeting at the new administrative buildings on the Castle site when the recommendation that it be called ‘Shire Hall’ was adopted without discussion. It was admirably suited to its purpose without any frills and decorations. But Councillor Fordham regretted the purchase of two Turkey carpets for the councillors’ room at cost of £37 32 07 29a & b

1933 05 08

The County Council is to change their staff’s weekly half-holiday from Thursday to Saturday, although the Clerk can to require the attendance of any member of staff on any Saturday afternoon if desirable. However senior officials should not lose their half-day. The public would have no cause for objection, though last Saturday afternoon 50 people applied for licences. The Guildhall has closed on Saturday afternoons for many years. 33 05 08

1933 07 31

The old County Hall in Hobson Street was supposed to be sold with the proceeds being used to pay for the new Shire Hall on Castle Hill. But now little tin advertising ‘To Let’ signs had appeared and there didn’t seem to be the slightest attempt to sell it, a councillor complained. But every effort had been made to dispose of it without success and they were now hoping to let a portion to the Government’s Office of Works which would suit the council equally as well as a sale. 33 07 31

1934 04 25

The first meeting of the new Chesterton Rural District Council was held in the County Hall. New councillors were told they had to consider problems such as water sewage, dust collection and lighting. They discussed a grant towards cleaning out a Harston pond. It was a ‘disputable pond’ – the village made use of it but it was private property. 34 04 25

1934 08 13

S.R. Ginn, County Council clerk 13 years, former Mayor – 34 08 13

1938 01 14

The old Shire Hall on Cambridge Market Hill, was erected in 1747. At that a time the 14th-century Guildhall which stood on the south of Butter Row was under repair. This was pulled down in 1782 to be replaced by the Guildhall built by James Essex. Now demolition has revealed a fragment of the medieval Guildhall. Two pieces of ancient oak carved with leaves are thought to date from 1386. They will be replaced in the new building 38 01 14b

1938 09 07

New police houses, garages and recreation room at Shire Hall – 38 09 07

1939 03 04

Tuberculosis work has been carried on in Camden Place for 25 years. Now the old dispensary is being demolished with a new clinic adjoining Shire Hall, Castle Hill opened by Prof Ryle. It is equipped with an X-ray apparatus of the highest quality with a skilled radiologist in charge of it. Now the death rate from tuberculosis in Cambridgeshire was one of the lowest. The new dental caravan was also on display 39 03 04a

1939 07 28

Cambridge Town council held its last meeting at Shire Hall while the Guildhall was reconstructed. The Library committee asked to use the Small Room as temporary reading room during the re-arrangement of the Central Library. But it had a very expensive carpet that might get spoilt. The library might use the Corn Exchange annexe if the cycles were moved. Ald Briggs said that was not a proper alternative: "The fact is that we have had made a beautiful Guildhall, but must not use it". The carpet could be taken up. But the Guildhall might not be finished by that time and it would be unfortunate if people were allowed in the Small Room before the rest were completed. The request was denied – 39 07 28b & c

1940

1943 02 26

Acute staff position. The acute position caused by the call-up of staff, was the subject of a special statement by the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Council (Ald. W. J. Taylor) at Saturday's meeting of the Council. Ald. Taylor said that, just before the war the staff operating from the Shire Hall - 30 men and 25 women. Of the men, 60 were serving with the forces, 15 were no longer with the council, and seven had been lent to other services. Only 48, therefore, of the original men were left, and of these 26 were over 42. Seventeen of the remainder were liable to be directed elsewhere by the Manpower Board, but only two were under 35 years of age. "We in Cambridgeshire, therefore, cannot be accused of 'protecting' a lot of young men from the services," the speaker added. Ald, Taylor next dealt with the women, and there was a general laugh after he said, "Two are married, and two are liable to be directed. Dr. Woodman asked "What. — to marriage ?" 43 02 26 CIPof

1945 05 12

Charles Phythian appointed clerk county council – CDN 1945 05 12

1947 07 30

History was made in the Shire Hall Council Chamber on Saturday, when Ald Mrs Mellish Clark, first woman chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Council, and of any County Council outside London, took the chair for the first time. She brought to it exactly the same degree of competence she brings to all meetings over which she presides, conducting the proceedings in a practical, business-like way, wasting no time on unessentials. She did not hesitate to call the meeting to order - doing this on two occasions when more than one tried to speak at the same time.

1948 04 08

The creation of a new county comprising the four administrative councils of Cambridgeshire, Isle of Ely, Huntingdon and the Soke of Peterborough, and the granting to the town of Cambridge the status of a county borough, are amongst the recommendations contained in the report of the Local Government Boundary Commission. The proposals also suggest that Newmarket Urban District Council should be transferred to the new county 48 04 08

1948 07 02

What might be termed the swan-song of the Cambridge County Council Public assistance Committee took place at Shire Hall. In common with many other similar committees its duties will be taken over by the Ministry of Health on 5th July. The chairman, Mrs Mellish Clark, said that at the County Hospital Mill Road they decided to develop the maternity work, to close the casual wards and move the nursery children out to Linton. At Chesterton Hospital they had built a new casual ward, but when the war came these wards were converted by the additional of hospital beds and were being so used at the present time. At Linton they had built a Nurses Home but as there was no proper sanitation at Caxton they had decided to pull it down

1948 07 26

The "chaotic condition" of Cambridge traffic was explained by Ald W.J. Taylor at a meeting of the County Council when he said: "They have tried to bring traffic into the town for the sake of the business of the town. They never thought to plan the town properly and the widening of some of the streets has been the biggest mistake there ever was. They talked about the ring road but took great care they never made it so that motorists should come in and spend their money". Councillor Dennard said the one-way traffic system, with streets used as car parks, had caused chaos

1948 09 27

The fear that the centre of gravity of the new Fen county to be formed from Cambridgeshire, Hunts., the Isle of Ely and the Soke of Peterborough would be at Peterborough and so cause Cambs villages to become forgotten backwater outposts, was expressed by the Chairman of the Parish Councils Association. The Boundary Commission have agreed to amalgamate the four counties and make a big new Fen county, to take Cambridge out of it and make it a new kind of county borough. "Histon and such like are quite big places at Shire Hall now, but we will have only a small voice at Peterborough", he said

1950

1951 01 29

Car parking, which shares with the rates the distinction of being Cambridge's thorniest and most discussed problem, was the subject of lively debate at the County Council. They passed a resolution viewing "with alarm the increasing list of prosecutions ... an indication that adequate facilities for visitors to the town from the rural areas are not provided" Dr Ellis described a police inspector's now often quoted remark: "Leave cars at home", as facetious. Cambridge was the only shopping town in the county and it was the authority's duty to provide for visiting motorists.

1951 03 05

Last-minute disclosure of what councillors described as the "astonishing", "fantastic" and "mad" extent of proposed salary increases to chief officers of Cambridgeshire County Council was made at a meeting. They involved increases of some 50%. The council rejected proposals of which would have increased the salaries of the Education Officer & County Treasurer from £1,460 to £2,200 & that of the County Surveyor from £1,260 to £2,200. The new scales had been adopted by 22 other councils 51 03 05

1951 05 23

Cambridgeshire can now boast one of the finest rural domestic economy kitchens in the country. Until recently the R.D.E. instructress (Miss M. Constantine) was housed in a basement in Hills Road, but this was damp and subject to flooding; consequently the equipment was liable to go rusty. The new kitchen is tucked away in the grounds of the Shire Hall. It has every kind of cooking stove – electricity, gas, calor gas, oil and solid fuel and boasts a demonstration oven with a glass door. A “frig” is to come later.

1952 03 01

Councillor Stewart Todd Bull has been nominated as the next mayor of Cambridge. He is the owner of the well-known firm of dairy farmers, Messrs J.M. Bull & son. When Cambridge was attacked by enemy aircraft in 1941 he was amongst those in Hills Road who were bombed out. He is a man endowed with the spirit of public service and after helping to look after the affairs of the city he frequently climbs Castle Hill to keep a watchful eye on the County Council.

1952 06 12

With all the familiar colour and dignity of a royal occasion, the date of the Queen’s coronation – June 2nd next year – was proclaimed today to the people of the city and county of Cambridge. It was a happy coincidence that it should mark a fitting and optimistic finale to the gay and glittering story of the May Week celebrations. A girl still in her May Ball gown and cloak was amongst a crowd of people outside the Shire Hall courts when the High Sheriff, following a fanfare, read the ancient proclamation. On the Market Square a crowd several hundred strong was silent when the Town Clerk began to read but his voice was all but lost in the howl from jet planes speeding overhead.

1952 06 21

Mr Lloyd Stokes, owner of land at Trinity Hall Farm, Milton, said there were 140 armoured vehicles on the land waiting to be shipped. He wanted an access from Green Park because he had a number of tanks coming through the back and wished to enlarge the front entrance on to Milton Road. It was dangerous and an agricultural machine such as a 12-foot combine could not get through. The County Council suggested the city should buy this piece of land and put there light industry, not likely to cause any nuisance

1952 07 21

The whole of the structure of the 112-year-old courts of assize at the old Shire Hall, Castle Hill, is unsafe and liable to collapse at any time. Dry rot has been attacking the floors and has now spread up the walls and plaster and into the roof. The damage is said to be irreparable and it is virtually certain that the County Council will have to write off the building as a total loss. The Court House, built of brick and stone in the Italian style has a portico supported on columns and comprises two courts and a magistrates’ room from which three prisoners recently escaped by removing an iron grill over a window. 52 07 21

1952 07 28

One of the first judges to sit in the Shire Hall Courts, built between 1814 and 1844, Mr Justice Parke, complained about the ventilation in the Crown court. Bad ventilation is one of the factors that cause dry rot and it is possible that it has taken 107 years to come to the present condition. It could be smelt very plainly and if a knife was stuck into the wood it would go in up to the hilt in most places. It was unfortunate that they had decorated the building three years ago at considerable expense and no one knew about it. Coun. Dr Woodman said: “I hope the committee will consider the dry rot in the minds of the jury as well as in the walls of the court. You are packed like peas in a pod and with bad ventilation you get one thought”.

1952 08 09

The news that the roof and interior of the Shire Hall Courts on Castle Hill, Cambridge are in danger of collapse has drawn attention to the statues on top of the building. The figures represent Law – holding a book, Justice – drawn sword (scales are missing), Mercy and – holding chain – Power

1952 10 24

Shire Hall Assize Courts demolition, p8

1952 12 05

Cambridge City Council are objecting to the County Council's proposal to demolish the Shire Hall courts at present suffering from dry rot; their consent is needed as the building is scheduled as of special architectural or historic interest. Ald Wilding thought it was hardly necessary to demolish the building just because of some defects in the woodwork & Ald Taylor put forward a plan for preserving its very fine façade, but Coun George Edwards said the best thing would be to demolish it and have a new building erected in its place. 52 12 12

1953 01 21

Cambridge city council have asked the County not to demolish the old Assize Courts which are at present closed because of dry rot. As it is a building of special architectural interest further consideration should be given to its preservation. Dry rot does not necessarily involve the demolition of the whole structure of an affected building – none of the Colleges have had to demolish their buildings, though many of them have been affected from time to time. But the County says there is no assurance that further infection could be prevented. They intend to re-erect the façade of the building elsewhere 53 01 21

1953 03 02

“Why not let the façade of the Assize Courts on Castle Hill be used as a ‘Marble Arch’ for the new Spine Relief Road” asked the Mayor of Cambridge during discussions on its removal. The City Council had been very concerned about its preservation but to dismantle and remake it would cost £12,000 and architects said it could not be placed on the new building. It was a secondary monument and not old enough to be preserved, being built in 1840. But the stone figures on the roof were to be saved. c53 03 04

1953 06 10

Sir – the Shire Hall assize courts were closed on my order in July last year because the structure had become dangerous. Dry rot had been rampant for at least 50 years and the improvised repairs had done nothing to eliminate it. During the work of demolition fragments of newspapers dated 1922 and 1925 have been found that were left by workmen repairing the dry rot in those days. The council had to decide whether to save the bare walls of the old building and rebuild the roof and the whole of the interior, or to demolish it. The extent of the damage is now clearly revealed and confirms the necessity of demolition – Wilfrid Wingate, County Architect. 53 06 10

1954 03 01

County councillors voted to proceed with their original plan for the new Shire Hall courts building. They also need to get their Town Planning people transferred from Hobson Street and must have further accommodation for the County Library, which is one of the finest – if not the finest – in England. Suggestions for putting another floor on the present Shire Hall would never be satisfactory. Services would be upset for about two years, the whole of the heating apparatus would have to be altered and it would cost nearly £70,000. There were plans for the basement to be used as offices but to put clerks down there would be like putting them in prison. 54 03 01

1953 04 13

The Cambridgeshire Divisional Magistrates Court sat for the last time in the old Shire Hall Courts, where justice has been meted out for over 100 years. It is just over eight months since it was found that the building was infested with dry rot and since then all courts, save the County Bench, have been accommodated in the Guildhall. Since then there have been many arguments in the County Council Chamber but the only solution they could find was that the building would have to be demolished.

1953 04 25

Does anybody want the façade of the Old Shire Hall, which is being demolished? The County Council has asked the City Council if they would like it, but the reply is 'No, thank you'. It will be interesting to see if the County offers it elsewhere. Erection of new street lighting on the main roads is proceeding apace and is to be extended to Queen's Road, better known as 'The Backs'. This new lighting should add to the attractiveness of this famous beauty spot.

1953 06 10

Sir – the Shire Hall assize courts were closed on my order in July last year because the structure had become dangerous. Dry rot had been rampant for at least 50 years and the improvised repairs had done nothing to eliminate it. During the work of demolition fragments of newspapers dated 1922 and 1925 have been found that were left by workmen repairing the dry rot in those days. The council had to decide whether to save the bare walls of the old building and rebuild the roof and the whole of the interior, or to demolish it. The extent of the damage is now clearly revealed and confirms the necessity of demolition – Wilfrid Wingate, County Architect

1953 11 02

The new Shire Hall court will not be an 'extravagant' but 'a fine utility' building, councillors were assured. They did not want panelling in every room and expensive carpets on the floor. Some wanted to build the new Court with an open frontage to the street, but it could not be done, as the site was not big enough. If they pulled down the existing police station and played 'Old Harry' it might be possible but on one side is the Castle Mound and there would be trouble galore they interfered with this.

1954 03 01

County councillors voted to proceed with their original plan for the new Shire Hall courts building. They also need to get their Town Planning people transferred from Hobson Street and must have further accommodation for the County Library, which is one of the finest – if not the finest – in England. Suggestions for putting another floor on the present Shire Hall would never be satisfactory. Services would be upset for about two years, the whole of the heating apparatus would have to be altered and it would cost nearly £70,000. There were plans for the basement to be used as offices but to put clerks down there would be like putting them in prison.

1954 06 30

Shire Hall palace, p8

1954 07 17

There were strong protests at plans for new offices at Shire Hall Cambridge. The new building would contain Assize and Quarter Sessions courts, offices and accommodation for the County Library. The courts at Linton, Caxton, Melbourn and Bottisham were 'shockers', housed in old police stations and the magistrates would be only too happy to do their work in an up-to-date building. Architects had strongly advised against cheese-pairing costs of the assembly hall: Cambridge's lovely college buildings had been the best and had stood the test of time and the costs of labour and materials were rising. But a new plan for one-tier local government might mean the doom of County Councils and the scheme should be deferred 54 07 17

1954 07 31

Cambridge city council attacked the County Council's cavalier attitude over their grandiose scheme for the replacement of the demolished Shire Hall Courts on Castle Hill. They can no longer tolerate the attitude of a powerful section of the County Council who seem bent on pursuing their own course with all the insensibility of a bureaucratic bulldozer. The Government has indicated it is likely to introduce Local Government reform and it is foolhardy to proceed with a scheme for more office accommodation when certain functions might transfer to the City Council and thus make the extra offices unnecessary. City residents provide 75 per cent of the county rate and should have a fair say in any such scheme. 54 07 31

1954 11 01

The old Shire Hall Assize courts no longer existed; it had been pulled down. That could not be altered; it was down and a new one had to be built, councillors were told. The Judges appreciate the temporary accommodation but occasionally inquire when the Assizes are expected to be held once more in the re-built Courts; they might get tired of waiting for them. We did not want to lose Cambridge as an Assize town. A proposal to defer their erection for two years was withdrawn but tenders will not be submitted for a year.

1955 01 03

Henry Wilkin, chief clerk of Cambridgeshire County Council, has retired after 55 years' service. At the age of 13 he had entered the office of a solicitor who in 1899 became Clerk to the Council, starting his career with local government and receiving five shillings a week out of which he had to hire a barrow to take books to the council office. He had served under three clerks, Samuel Ginn, Ashley Tabrum and Charles Phythian. He was presented with a small walnut bureau and a Westminster chiming grandmother clock. 55 01 03

1955 03 19

Three cottages in Gloucester Street have been purchased by the County Council who will demolish them to facilitate access to the land at the rear of Shire Hall. The cottages would shortly come outside the control of the Rents Act and they wanted to obtain possession. Until ready to start the proposed improvements they will use one of the cottages as temporary office accommodation. The present occupants will be rehoused in a Council house. 55 03 19

1955 07 30

What's all this about people getting married at Shire Hall not being allowed to park their cars in the Council car park? Have the County Council no romance in their hearts and do they want to lose custom? People will be saying "Don't go to the Shire Hall for your wedding; if you do you'll be chivvied out of it pronto". Some say park in front of the County Police headquarters – but this will stop patrol cars getting out of the police yard. Who occupies the Council car park anyway? Members of the Council and staff. Are there too many of these and too many cars? I only asked! 55 07 30b

1956 02 25

Courts tender deferred, Cambridge Daily News criticised for leading campaign against the proposed building 56 02 25a, 56 02 26a & c

1956 03 30

If the number of cars increases motorists won't be able to get in to Cambridge very easily because of all the stationary cars cluttering up the streets and the whole problem of parking is extremely frustrating. It is time to get tough. If we must set up car parks outside the city and run the people in by special buses then we mustn't hesitate. But the land once occupied by the old Shire Hall courts on Castle Hill would make a good site for a multi-deck car park. 56 03 30b

1957 11 03

Shire Hall – new storey proposed – 57 11 03

1958 02 03

Shire Hall is to be enlarged by an additional storey, increasing office accommodation by 20 per cent. Several councillors argued this was unnecessary in times of financial stringency when secondary education had to reduce its expenditure. But builders are short of work and will do it at a competitive figure. It was a long-term policy to achieve centralisation of the council's administration. 58 02 03a & b [2.22]

1958 05 05

An extra storey was urgently needed at Shire Hall, councillors were told. In the Treasurer's Department the staff were sitting on top of one another. In the Registrar's Office, people had to wait

in a passage if there was a wedding on. And the County Archivist, who really needed four rooms, had only one. But at Linton Hospital they had been asked to economise and the cost of the new Shire Hall must not interfere with works of that kind. They voted to go ahead. 58 05 05 & b

1958 07 24

Shire Hall new storey tender – 58 07 24b

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960 03 01

Cambridge should be granted County Borough status and so control its own destiny, the Local Government Commission recommends in its draft proposals. But Cambridgeshire would not then be an effective administrative unit and should be merged with the Soke of Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely to be able to provide a comprehensive range of services. Royston Urban District should join the new county but Newmarket should remain in West Suffolk and St Neots be transferred to Bedfordshire. Now the recommendations will be subject to public consultation. 60 03 01 & a

1960 03 02

Proposals to amalgamate Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, the Isle of Ely and the Soke of Peterborough into a new county have been described as ‘local government gone mad’ by the MP for Cambridgeshire. David Renton is also known to oppose any suggestion that Huntingdonshire should lose its separate identity and may resign from the Government if the proposal goes through. Major Legge-Bourke for the Isle of Ely says it is impossible for fenland areas to be efficiently government by people who do not understand their special problems. The only MP to welcome the proposal is Hamilton Kerr for Cambridge City who says he is delighted that the claim for county borough status has been recognised. 60 03 02a

1960 03 18

In a small room hidden away at the back of the Shire Hall, from which the County Civil Defence services were once run, a huge and priceless collection of books, maps and documents relating to the Bedford Level Corporation have just been delivered. Soon the newly-appointed County Records Officer, Miss Clare Cross, Honorary County Archivist Captain Percy Bales and manuscript repair expert, Mr B. Grainger, will start the vast job of indexing them. The work of the County Records Office is growing so quickly that recently it moved into larger and better accommodation which once formed part of the Shire Hall Clinic 60 03 18c

1962 06 21

County council ‘At Home’ on lawns of Shire Hall – 62 06 21

1962 08 18

Site of old Shire Hall courts cleverly landscaped to hide the car park which lies in front of trees – 62 08 18

1963 08 02

The Government decision to reject Cambridge City Council’s claim for county borough status was described as a ‘profound disappointment’. Although its case has been recognised Cambridge is to again be sacrificed on the altar of rural interests, councillors feel. The Local Government Commission says the administrative counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely should be amalgamated to form one local government unit and that Huntingdonshire should join with the Soke of Peterborough 63 08 02

1964 01 14

Planners need maps to show countless aspects of community life and County Council draughtsmen are continually producing them. Within Shire Hall the maps are conceived, drawn and even printed on

their own printing presses. Huge cabinets store maps of almost every inch of Cambridgeshire. Some are produced with the aid of aerial photographs. Colour often has to be used and when maps have to be printed it means special 'overlay' negatives have to be drawn for each colour and a separate printing plate produced for each. 64 01 14

1964 10 05

The new Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Council was 'thrust upon us by a dying Parliament in defiance of local history and deep-seated tradition', claimed Coun. M.S. Pease. But the new chairman, Ald Jeeps, urged councillors to try to make it a success. He has worked all his life as a farmer and fruit grower, is courteous, firm, persuasive and quick to see a compromise solution to problems. He also knows the importance of silence as chairman. This makes him an ideal person for the job, Ald Rickwood, of the Isle of Ely County Council, said. 64 10 05

1965 05 31

Speaking at the final meeting of Cambridgeshire County Council before its amalgamation with the Isle of Ely Ald P.J. Watts said there had never been and would never be a more effective unit of local government. They had been a progressive authority with a world-wide reputation in the field of education which was efficient and served by a hard-working staff of great loyalty. Now they were being abolished by people who know a great deal about local government but do not understand it, in the interests of effective convenient local government 65 03 31a

1965 10 15

Shire Hall not to open car park to public at weekend – 65 10 15b

1966 07 02

Chesterton RDC new offices at Gt Eastern House, Station Road, to open – 66 07 02

1966 07 30

Former clerk to Cambs & Isle of Ely County Council, Charles Phythian, allowed to retain double salary payments when acting as clerk to County Council and chief officer of new combined authority – 66 07 30, 30a

1967 05 06

Shire Hall redevelopment envisages 15-storey block of offices and law court, car parking under pedestrian precinct – 67 05 06

1967 07 26

County Council buy Howes Close mansion and 23 acres as extension Shire Hall site, to move Country Centre students – 67 07 26

1969 06 11

Maud report on local government says Cambridge to become geographical centre of huge new authority as part of three-tier system – 69 06 11

1970

1971 01 27

Shire Hall plan Castle Court extension with landscaped offices – 71 01 27b

1971 02 06

County Hall Hobson Street may be sold by county council to raise money for new offices behind Shire Hall – 71 02 06

1973 05 23

The £11,000 a year top management job on the new Cambridgeshire County Council has been given to 38-year-old Mr John Barratt, the deputy town clerk of Bradford. He will take control of the hundreds of staff who will ultimately be appointed to the new council or transferred from the present Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Council. One of his first jobs will be to advise on the appointment of a team of chief officers who will form a boardroom style management group when the new council takes over responsibility from the old on April 1st next year 73 05 23

1974 02 27

The Queen has agreed to allow Cambridge to remain a city after local government reorganisation takes effect on April 1st. Her decision means that the ancient office of Mayor of Cambridge will continue. The new mayor will be Councillor Jack Warren who has been chairman of the Labour-controlled district council since their formation last June

1974 04 01

Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Council has died at the age of only nine. And before their chairman, Ald. Maurice Payne, performed the last rites by formally signing the minutes, he expressed doubts about the wisdom of Whitehall in killing them off in their prime of life. The council are a victim of the nation-wide local government reorganisation which comes into effect on 1st April. They are being replaced by the new Cambridgeshire County Council made up of an amalgamation with Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council.

1974 04 02

Throughout the country hundreds of local councils are ready for the blast off into a new age. The council reorganisation which takes place today is the biggest upheaval ever to affect local government in this country. Hundreds of rural, urban, borough and city councils are swept away and their places taken by a new structure of county councils working with a network of district authorities. With a wan smile they have shrugged off the all-too-obvious jokes which were levelled against the start date for the new administration – April 1st

1974 04 30

One of the most significant features of the reorganisation of local government from 1st April 1974, has been the changes in function. Cambridge City Council will have no further responsibility for education, libraries, weights and measures, sewage disposal, or the domiciliary health service. The advantages claimed for the transfer of these services to larger bodies should lead to greater specialisation, the adoption of improved methods and techniques, better levels of service and economy of scale. Time will show whether these ideals can be realised.

1976 02 05

The Government has no intention of turning Cambridge into a museum city, said the Environment Secretary. He told MPs that fears that the Government-backed policy of moderate restraint would mean stagnation were unjustified. It was no secret that there had been differences of opinion between the City and County councils over the proper planning policies to be pursued in the region. Growth would continue but they could not countenance unlimited boon growth with the considerable impact that would have on the Cambridge environment.

1976 02 07

Save Shire Hall library, p7

1976 02 27

Shire Hall library, p8

1976 03 03

The branch library at the Cambridge Shire Hall is to close down and will be replaced once-a-week by a visit of one of the county council's mobile libraries. The decision to close down the library – to save an estimated £6,000 a year was taken at the county budget meeting. A petition of more than 500

signatures of readers asked for the building to continue. When a vote was taken there were 25 for and 25 against and the decision was taken on the casting vote of the Chairman.

1976 03 16

Both visitors and staff at the Cambridge County Record Office, Shire Hall, are still having to put up with overcrowded conditions. One visitor has described conditions as “the worst of any record office in the country”. The county archivist says in his annual report that there has been no improvement in office or search room space. One woman who had been offered a post on the staff had declined it because of the overcrowding which she had observed. # c.43

1976 12 20

The Government has chopped almost £10 million off its cash aid to Cambridgeshire County Council. Senior councillors have been shocked at the figure, which is almost £4 million more than originally anticipated and the most savage cut in the country. Councillors said that last year the Government took account of the county’s growing population, but this year it has gone back to the old method and is working on population figures that are two years out of date. They have decided to shift money in favour of London and major urban areas 76 12 20

1977 09 23

Whitehall has rejected Cambridge City Council’s representations that the County needs a larger slice of the rate support grant “cake”, because of its growing population. The Department of Environment says that a larger population provides scope for economies of scale and will bring an increase of rate income because of new building. It adds that Cambridgeshire receives less aid because its needs are lower than those of most other authorities. The Chairman of the Finance Panel described the reply as “just Government waffle”

1978 02 14

A County Council report recommends that two old church schools in the centre of Cambridge, Park Street and St Matthew’s, should close. It says no school will take more than 60 infants a year; all schools will have nursery classes from three-plus, and that separate infants and junior schools will be merged into one school taking children right up to 11. Catchment zones will be introduced for primary schools. At present Morley Memorial is under a great deal of pressure and children are taught in a rented church hall across a busy road while Sedley Infants and Romsey Junior have empty places.

1978 10 03

Cambridge’ Drummer Street bus station may be extended on to the adjoining Christ’s Pieces within the next few years as County Council traffic experts and the bus companies have agreed that expansion of the present site is the best way of bringing it up to date. The facilities such as booking office, news-stands & toilets are scattered, cramped and unsightly and there are no proper information displays. The city council has suggested the station should be moved into the Kite Area and Conservation interests prefer disused land near the railway station should be used. But the County rejects both locations

1979 02 02

The old Rex Cinema and ballroom in Magrath Avenue Cambridge which has been a source of controversy among nearby residents is now owned by Cambridgeshire County Council who paid £33,000 for it at auction. The building has been almost derelict since the Abbey Sports and Social Club closed in October 1973. The exact future of the site has yet to be decided but it will extend the present facilities at the Shire Hall

1979 07 04

Cambridgeshire County Council has decided to establish its permanent headquarters at the Shire Hall. The council set up its ‘temporary’ headquarters at Cambridge following local government reorganisation more than five years ago but decided to move eventually to the Hinchingsbrooke estate at Huntingdon. Now they have changed their minds: Huntingdon is not scheduled as a major centre of

the future while Cambridge is a regional centre of public administration and an internationally-known city. It is a natural magnet for staff and to move would have a seriously demoralising effect. The Shire Hall site is large enough for all their administrative needs and officers pointed out the high cost of building at a time when the council was already in financial difficulties. Now the land reserved for the new office complex is to be sold.

1979 08 22

At the back of the Shire Hall and behind the Sir Isaac Newton pub in Cambridge sits a small, portable office. It houses four dedicated workers who are preparing for nuclear war and other major disasters such as flooding, hurricanes and air crashes. Total nuclear war is a frightening prospect and the Government has taken steps to plan for such a holocaust. Now parish councillors are to be trained as the latest part of the contingency plans; they would act as 'community advisors', helping to bring life back to normal in highly disrupted areas.

1979 10 18

The Government has stopped the County Council from closing Cambridge's Park Street Primary School because of its 'value to the community'. But plans to close Brunswick Primary School have been approved. This is a great disappointment for parents who campaigned vigorously to keep it open. Nearly £800,000 has been earmarked to convert the buildings into a further education centre. The County will accept the ruling but the number of children attending both schools had dropped and the problems will not go away. Now much harder decisions will have to be made that will affect schools throughout the city.

1980

1980 02 12

South Cambridgeshire District Councillors agreed an extension to their offices costing nearly £1½ m in spite of opposition which claimed the move was ill-timed in the light of Government cuts. At present their administration is divided between Great Eastern House, in Station Road and South Cambridgeshire Hall about a quarter of a mile away. The aim is to sell off this site for offices which would help offset costs of the new council chamber and car park. But some say there would be more advantages in developing a site outside Cambridge with a city office to deal with the public. 80 02 12

1980 06 20

The war plan for Cambridgeshire which will detail the role of the county council is not yet finished. A regional commissioner would be introduced in the run-up to any attack and county controllers would go to their headquarters in the basements of the Shire hall. This is a small, rather cluttered room with little more than maps, telephones and teleprinters and no special protection other than the thickness of the walls. 80 06 20c

1980 11 18

More than 1,000 demonstrators massed in the centre of Cambridge in protest over plans to slash County Council spending. They chanted and jeered councillors arriving for a meeting. A macabre scaffold with a schoolboy hanging from it stood near Shire Hall as part of an attempt to halt cuts of £2 million which would serious damage services, particularly education. But Francis Pym, MP, said the world is in a very deep recession and they must make difficult decisions. 80 11 18

1981 11 03

Councillors have been astonished at a bill of £34,000 for furnishing county education headquarters at a time when children and teachers have been asked to bear savage cutbacks. Most of the money has gone on the former Pye building on the Shire Hall site. It has wall-to-wall carpeting and an impressive range of modern office furniture with £400 spent on waste paper bins alone. Some equipment should have been transferred from the old offices. 81 11 03a

1982 05 12

South Cambs councillors may pull down the temporary prefabricated building known as South Cambridgeshire Hall and build a four-storey office block in its place. They would then dispose of Great Eastern House near the railway station and centralise all its staff on the Hills Road site. Whether they will actually be prepared to spend a lot of money on the scheme has yet to be seen. In the past councillors have brought up the idea on numerous occasions but decided against it on cost grounds. 82 05 12a

1982 09 15

A pub, a row of shops and six acres of office buildings in Castle Hill and Gloucester Street may be sold by Cambridgeshire County Council. They want reduce the sprawling Shire Hall site and abandon the ramshackle array of offices at the rear of the main complex. They are expensive to maintain and unpopular with staff who work in them. Discussions with developers will take place soon. 82 09 15

1982 10 15

In the basement of Shire Hall is an 'Emergency Planning Room' packed with maps, telephones and radio sets. It has windows, thickish walls and a large conference table but would offer virtually no protection from a direct nuclear hit. It is designed to act as a communications network liaising with the emergency services, the water authority, railways and so on during any emergency from floods in Wisbech to the sudden cutting of the county's gas supplies. 82 10 15 & a

1982 12 09

Accommodation for computer-based companies in Cambridge is at a premium. Several firms are run from private houses with others based around King's Parade and Jesus Lane, where buildings are available and rents favourable. Now a technology square is planned for land at the rear of Shire Hall similar to Trinity College's Science Park but at smaller rents. There might be dual-purpose buildings for start-up companies providing both a home and an office to work in. 82 12 09

1983 01 13

Cambridge was the first place to provide a science park. Now the County Council propose to establish a technology village on the Shire Hall redevelopment site. The novel scheme would provide both houses and workshops in an attempt to create a 21st-century high technology community. It would have offices, shops, a pub and recreational facilities. Secretaries and photocopiers could be shared. 83 01 13

1983 06 30

A scheme to develop seven acres of land behind Shire Hall for offices and a high technology centre will save the Isaac Newton pub and other buildings in Castle Street which had been under threat of demolition. It will include 520 basement car parking spaces together with twelve terrace houses on Magrath Avenue. At present the site is covered by a ramshackled array of ancient council office buildings which are difficult and expensive to maintain and unpopular with the staff working in them. 83 06 30 p7

1983 07 01

The County Hall office block in Hobson Street which houses a major section of the county council's social services department may be sold to Christ's college for £1.25 million and converted into student accommodation. It would be one of the biggest property deals in the much sought-after city centre location for years. Scores of council officials would be moved into the new offices planned at the back of Shire Hall. 83 07 01 p1

1983 09 05

County councillors have ordered a big clean-up of the car park off Magrath Avenue – once the site of the Rex Cinema. Since the cinema was demolished two years ago it has been used as a public car park by residents. But it has also become a dumping ground for abandoned cars and garden rubbish. It forms part of the eight-acre site at the rear and sides of Shire Hall which is to be extensively redeveloped early next year. 83 09 05 p12

1983 09 29

The Cambridge Civic Society, which fights planning applications around Cambridge, is being wound up and its members urged to join the Cambridge Preservation Society – the group from which it split off in 1961. Projects in which they have been involved include the Kite area, Stansted airport, the M11 Inquiry and Robinson College. At present they are concerned about the proposed large office development on the Shire Hall site, preferring to see it as a community area. 83 09 29 p19

1983 10 27

The controversial plan to finish the widening of East Road is to go ahead despite growing opposition. The County Council leader says nothing is going to stop them from completing the work. The City council claim the road is a waste of money and would have a serious and harmful effect on St Matthew's primary school. They have placed a tree preservation order on saplings growing in the school forecourt to prevent the county from starting to widen the road. But the county claim this is illegal and challenged it in the High Court. 83 10 27 p11

1984 09 07

The County Council chairman condemned councillors for their 'pathetic attempts' to sort out the Cambridge traffic problem. "There is no doubt whatever that what we do in Cambridge is pathetic compared to what is done elsewhere. We really do not know what we are doing in this city", he said, adding that the county must keep up pressure on the city council to provide more parking facilities in Cambridge. 84 09 07

1984 09 25

Cambridge traffic and parking scheme have come and gone like the tide. Each has aroused opposition, usually vociferous. Sometimes it has been strong enough to stop the thing completely. Constant bickering between the City and County Councils has done nothing to solve the traffic problems which stems from a division of responsibility between the two authorities. Some hope of sorting out the tangles arose with the introduction of the city Traffic Management Team. Now a tough new traffic control system comes into operation. 84 09 25

1985 03 11

A major shake-up to cope with the forecast massive increase in Cambridge traffic has been unveiled by the County Council. It suggests an underground car park at the Butts Green end of Midsummer Common and a new road following the main railway line with a new bridge over the Cam. There could be reconstruction of a number of major road junctions including East Road - Newmarket Road and at Hyde Park Corner with widening of dual carriageways and new cycleways. A park-and-ride system of new car parks linked to the centre by frequent buses is also proposed 85 03 11

1985 03 11

A furious political row has erupted over the sudden and unexpected publication by the Labour-controlled City Council of its new roads and traffic plan just before the County Council issued their proposals. It envisages a park and ride system, converting long-term city centre parking spaces to short-term shoppers' parks, an extension of Lion Yard car park, road closures, pedestrian areas and a special coach-bus interchange near the railway station. The Liberals describe it as a waste of paper. It has been produced without any councillors or officials being told about it before its release to the press 85 03 11a

1985 04 20

South Cambridgeshire ratepayers can be assured there are no frills or trimmings in the new £2 million council headquarters on Hills Road. The new base is an energy-saving building which will be workmanlike and maintenance-free. There is an air-conditioned council chamber with video facilities that may be rented out for conferences. Bullet-proof glass will increase security. The idea of moving out into a village was rejected as Cambridge was felt to be a central point. But car parking is likely to be a problem with 105 spaces for the 200 staff many of whom will have to park in the streets when councillors are meeting 85 04 20

1985 05 07

The new-look Cambridgeshire County Council may descend into political chaos unless a compromise over who works with whom can be worked out. The Liberal SDP Alliance with 26 seats is seeking a three-way administration with the Conservatives (29 seats) or the Labour with 21. But Labour has turned down the Alliance Plan and the Conservatives will agree to power sharing only if the new council accepts their financial policies. Controversial plans to widen East Road have been scrapped as has a railway-road plan which would have destroyed large housing and commercial areas of Cambridge. 85 05 07

1985 05 29

Castle Park, the £10 million high-tech development on County Council land next to Shire Hall has been inaugurated. It offers 'thinking space' to scientists and academics involved in research and development of high-technology ideas. The project will be fully self-contained with its own conference facilities, restaurant, gymnasium, squash courts and overnight accommodation as well as centrally available office equipment and secretarial support. A key attribute is its location in the heart of the city close to many of the University's colleges. 85 05 29b

1987 10 22

Staff at the County Council's emergency centre in the grounds of Shire Hall learned a few lessons last week during the hurricane. The bunker has a television but no radio to receive local or national reports. However during the gales the television stations were off the air, so a radio is now to be brought in. The Home Office refused to pay for a fridge, freezer or microwave but these will now be purchased. A generator can provide power for 30 days and water is stored for the same period. The list of those who would use it is secret but would include top council officials, civic leaders and representatives of police, fire and ambulance. 87 10 22

1985 11 13

The £5-million park-and-ride system planned for Cambridge could be scrapped. Behind-the-scene moves are under way at Shire Hall to replace it with an equally controversial parking area for 2,000 cars under Midsummer Common. The Labour-controlled city council is backing the idea of a ring of major ground-level car parks linked to the centre with a cheap bus service. But they need the support of the Conservative-led County Council which questions who is to pay the set-up charge and the estimated £1-million a year running costs. 85 11 13

1986 04 03

Gordon Lister, a Scotsman, has been appointed as chief executive of Cambridgeshire County Council at a starting salary of £45,000 a year. He will take over from John Barratt who has held the post since the authority was formed during the nation-wide local government reorganisation in the 1970s. The job is difficult as no overall political party has overall control so every decision is fiercely contested and instantly becomes highly controversial 86 04 03

1987 10 22

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1987 11 11

Cambridge's gallows are up for sale – but it is unlikely they will be coming 'home'. Their owner, a Nottingham policeman, is asking £10,000 for them. This is well out of reach of the city's museums, said John Goldsmith, County Museums Officer, whose office at Shire Hall stands on the site of the

former gaol. The gallows stood in Cambridge from around 1860 to 1930 and were used five times to execute murderers. The first hanging took place in 1864, the last in 1913 87 11 11a # c.34.9

1988 07 11

Castle Park, Cambridge's showpiece research and development village was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh. Developed by Sheraton and financed by Royal Life, it was designed to provide 'thinking space' for scientists and academics involved in high-technology developments. The initiative came from the County Council who were faced with the need to provide more office accommodation for its staff and developed land adjoining Shire Hall. The first phase, Castle House, Babbage House and Sheraton House was completed last year 88 07 11b, c. d

1988 10 18

Cambridge may have a city-wide high-speed monorail system linking with all nearby villages allowing shoppers to leave their cars at home and travel high above the traffic jams. It could be expensive to set up but would have low running costs and be reliable. Eight years ago dons at Girton College came up with a plan for a monorail to link it with the university quarter but nothing ever came of it. The County Council has already commissioned experts to consider a light railway system linked to the proposed park-and-ride system 88 10 18a

1989 02 10

Cambridgeshire County Council could be abolished in a massive town hall shake up. Liberal Democrats want to replace it with three small authorities, one be an amalgamation between Cambridge and South Cambs councils. The Government has decided to eventually scrap county-wide structure plans and replace them with local area plans. But they are angry at suggestions that city residents should be issued with identity cards giving concessionary fees to council-run leisure facilities. 89 02 10

1989 02 21

CITS formerly county council computer section closes 89 02 21.2.89

1989 11 15

A Home Office exercise will test the County Council's emergency and civil protection plans. Brian Smith, Peter Willbridge and Dick Turpin will join a team of 30 people manning the Emergency Control Centre in an underground bunker at Shire Hall. It will be a 'desk top' exercise to test communications and information-gathering skills needed during disasters such as fenland flooding or chemical explosions. 89 11 15a

1989 12 09

Cambridgeshire County Council is facing recruitment problems and is calling on pensioners to stay on after reaching 65. The current retirement policy was made when the economic situation was very different from that of today. This is now an area of very low unemployment and it seems sensible to allow people with many years of valuable experience to carry on. They will also consider recruiting retired applicants on a temporary basis for vacancies which would otherwise be hard to fill. 89 12 09a

1990 01 25

The County Councillors are worried about the quick turnover of staff and difficulties in replacing them. There are vacancies in all departments and a severe shortage of lawyers, surveyors and teachers. The council pays lower salaries than other county authorities, which also offer cars with jobs. Now they may increase wage scales, improve subsidised mortgage arrangements and removal expenses. Staff do not always leave for extra money; they also look for job satisfaction or better career opportunities. 90 01 25a

1990 02 20

Get-rich quick property speculators are hovering like vultures over Shire Hall hoping to pick up land and property which the County Council is selling off at bargain basement prices to keep down the poll

tax. With the depressed state of the property market they are throwing away valuable County Council assets the Labour opposition claims. Conservatives admit their hoped-for sale would fall at least £2M short of their target but say that builders hit by the property slump are prepared to carry out cut-price work, compensating for the lower prices raised in land sales 90 02 20b

1990 04 20

Cambridgeshire county council officials given huge salary rises, 600 now earn more than £20,000 pa – 90 04 20a

1990 07 21

Cambridgeshire County Council must make budget cuts to avoid poll tax capping – 90 07 21